

VZCZCXRO6214
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDIR RUEHKUK
DE RUEHMK #1915/01 3171213

ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 131213Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5964
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFIS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHBVAKS/COMUSNAVCENT PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 001915

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/09/2016

TAGS: PREL MARR MOPS PHUM KDEM ETRD BEXP BA REGION

OFFICIALS

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER CITES MILITARY COOPERATION AS
SIGN OF STRENGTH OF BILATERAL RELATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

.

Summary

¶1. (C) Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa told the Ambassador November 6 that Bahrain's participation in the late October Proliferation Security Initiative Leading Edge was a sign of the strength of the U.S.-Bahrain relationship. He noted that Iranian Foreign Minister Motakki had asked to visit Bahrain during the exercise but the GOB had refused, saying it was too busy at that time. Shaikh Khalid was pleased to learn that Bahrain had now formally joined the combined naval coalition patrolling the Arabian Sea and Gulf. The Ambassador expressed disappointment that former Secretary Albright's October visit had not resulted in a path for NDI to return to Bahrain. The Minister said Bahrain would continue to work with NDI and indicated that the GOB was not pleased with the management of NDI's potential partner, the Bahrain Institute for Political Development. In response to the Ambassador's suggestion, Shaikh Khalid said that he would talk to the Crown Prince about leading a business delegation to the United States to promote the free trade agreement. The Minister said he would visit Moscow soon, and the first item on the agenda is Russia's position on Iran, which "is making us uncomfortable." End Summary.

Bahrain "an Ally, Partner, and Friend"

¶2. (C) In a November 6 meeting covering several subjects (septels), Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa told the Ambassador that Bahrain's participation in the late October Proliferation Security Initiative exercise Leading Edge, which took place in the Gulf off the coast of Bahrain, was a sign of the strength of U.S.-Bahraini relations. Bahrain's relationship with the United States, Shaikh Khalid said, was its most important in the world, and Bahrain would continue to work with the U.S. as an ally, partner, and friend. "This is His Majesty's (King Hamad) view, and our policy," the Minister declared.

¶3. (C) Shaikh Khalid noted that some allies in the region, notably Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, had shied away from Leading Edge. The Kuwaiti chief of staff's statement "puzzled us." If he did not want to come, that is fine, Shaikh Khalid said, but he did not have to talk about it publicly. The Ambassador indicated that Kuwait may have stayed away because of Iranian pressure, noting that Foreign Minister Motakki visited Kuwait just two days after the exercise. Shaikh Khalid said that Motakki had also wanted to visit Bahrain,

during the exercise, but the GOB had refused, saying it was "too busy" at that time.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador stated that Navcent's ties to Saudi Arabia were improving and that the Saudi government was cooperating with Navcent to protect oil facilities following the recent threat. He also noted that Bahrain had now formally joined the combined naval coalition patrolling the Arabian Sea and Gulf. Shaikh Khalid said he and the GOB were very pleased to be the first in the Gulf to be a part of the coalition.

Possible Changes Coming at BIPD

¶5. (C) The Ambassador expressed his disappointment that former Secretary Albright's October visit had not resulted in a path for NDI to return to Bahrain. Shaikh Khalid pledged that the GOB would continue to work with NDI, saying it had not cut relations. The problem, however, was not NDI, but that "ten similar organizations from other countries" would want to work in Bahrain under the same conditions as NDI if they were permitted to do so. (Note: Bahraini officials often mention Iran in this context.) The Minister said that after Bahrain's (November 25 and December 5) elections, the GOB would conduct a review of presumptive NDI partner the Bahrain Institute for Political Development's (BIPD) internal operations. "We're not comfortable with the way things are going," he said. He commented that many in Bahrain feel that BIPD Secretary General Lulwa Al Awadhi is a problem. The Ambassador added that members of the BIPD board have told him that they have a hard time working with Al Awadhi, saying the board does not meet nor discuss issues.

MANAMA 00001915 002 OF 002

GOB Needs to Promote FTA

¶6. (C) The Ambassador briefed Shaikh Khalid on his mid-October tour of four American cities with eight other U.S. Ambassadors to Arab countries to promote trade and investment ties. He stated that U.S. economic relations are growing with all countries in the region and Bahrain has to do a better job promoting itself if it wants to attract American business. He suggested that the GOB send delegations to the United States to promote Bahrain and the free trade agreement. Shaikh Khalid agreed, saying that perhaps Crown Prince Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa could lead a "hefty" business delegation to several American cities. He promised to talk the CP about this idea.

Moscow Trip to Focus on Iran

¶7. (C) The Minister noted that he would depart shortly for an official trip to Moscow, the first ever by a Bahraini foreign minister for a bilateral visit. He will meet with President Putin, Foreign Minister Lavrov, and former Foreign Ministers Igor Ivanov and Yevgeny Primakov. He was going simply because he had received an invitation, noting that he has known Lavrov since 1986. The primary issue, he said, is Russia's position on Iran, which "is making us uncomfortable." They are arguing for procrastination, Shaikh Khalid said. Russia's position should be that Iran must abide by international law and legitimacy and should not develop WMD. Russia's position on Lebanon is also worrying. Russia appears to be against the Lebanese government's own position that the international criminal court should try the Hariri assassination case, "like that for Milosevic." Russia apparently wants a lower level court to take on the case.

Yemen Consultative Group Meeting

¶ 8. (C) Shaikh Khalid said he would participate in the November 15-16 Yemen Consultative Group meeting in London. Bahrain will support Yemen through the GCC. Yemen prefers that countries provide direct assistance to the government, but Bahrain wants to work through the World Bank, which can provide project review and an assessment of Yemen's ability to absorb assistance. It is important to help Yemen because Iran is supporting terrorists there. Shaikh Khalid said that other upcoming meetings include the GCC Summit, Forum for the Future in Jordan, IISS Gulf Dialogue in Manama, and NATO ICI meeting in Kuwait.

Visit Embassy Manama's Classified Website:

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/manama/>

MONROE